

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

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FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 3711

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FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY JULES KATZ FROM CHARGE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR, AS

SUBJECT: CIVAIR: US-AUSTRALIAN CONSULTATIONS

REF: A. CANBERRA 5171, B. STATE 164896, C. CANBERRA 5067

1. I CALLED TODAY ON SECRETARY OF DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT, CHARLES HALTON, TO EXPRESS USG'S STRONG VIEW REGARDING IMPORTANCE OF HOLDING AVIATION TALKS ON SCHEDULED JULY 10 DATE. POINTS COVERED IN YOUR CABLE (REFTEL B) WERE THOROUGHLY DISCUSSED, AND AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IS FULLY AWARE OF IMPORTANCE WHICH WE ATTACH TO PROCEEDING ON SCHEDULE.

2. HALTON REPEATED JOHN ROWLAND'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF GOA COMMITMENT TO HOLD WASHINGTON DISCUSSIONS IN JULY AND REAFFIRMED GOA WILLINGNESS TO MEET ITS COMMITMENT BY ADHERING TO JULY 10 DATE, IF WASHINGTON INSISTS THAT DISCUSSIONS TAKE PLACE ON THAT DATE.

3. HALTON STATED THAT AVIATION POLICY REVIEW IS NOW BEFORE THE MINISTERS (I.E., IT HAS MOVED FROM MINISTER NIXON TO CABINET) BUT THAT THE DECISIONS ARE EXTREMELY
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DIFFICULT ONES. WITH CABINET DECISIONS STILL NOT TAKEN, IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR GOA TO PROVIDE NEGOTIATING INSTRUCTIONS TO ITS DELEGATION CHAIRMAN, AND THERE WOULD ACCORDINGLY BE NO WAY BY WHICH AUSTRALIAN DELEGATION COULD ENGAGE IN SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSIONS. WE COULD, SAID HALTON, MERELY LISTEN. HALTON STRESSED THAT DELIBERATE PACE TOWARDS ENUNCIATING OF NEW AVIATION POLICY WAS NOT A STALLING

DEVICE BUT A REFLECTION OF DIFFICULTIES OF THE CHOICES, AND SUGGESTED THAT HIGH LEVEL OF PRESS ATTENTION TO PROGRESS OF REVIEW WAS VISIBLE EVIDENCE THAT MATTER WAS NOT BEING QUIETLY SIDESTEPED.

4. HALTON SUGGESTED THAT JULY 10 DISCUSSIONS WITH UNINSTRUCTED AUSTRALIAN DELEGATION WOULD BE EXTREMELY UNSATISFACTORY FROM EVERYONE'S STANDPOINT. ROWLAND (WHO WAS ALSO PRESENT) ALSO OBSERVED THAT GOA WOULD BE LOOKING TO DISCUSSION OF ITS PROPOSALS FOR REVISION OF BILATERAL, WHICH ROWLAND SUGGESTED THAT USG HAD PERHAPS NOT SUFFICIENTLY FOCUSED ON, INASMUCH AS THESE WERE DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED TO MANY U.S. POSITIONS. THUS, AUSTRALIANS FELT IT WOULD BE FAR PREFERABLE TO WAIT FOR AVIATION POLICY DECISION, WITH LATTER PART OF AUGUST A PERIOD THEY WOULD AIM FOR, IN DEFERENCE TO POLITICAL PRESSURES FACING U.S., THOUGH EARLY SEPTEMBER WOULD BE MORE COMFORTABLE FROM THEIR STANDPOINT.

5. I BELIEVE THERE ARE SEVERAL ELEMENTS TO BE CONSIDERED IN WASHINGTON IN MAKING DECISION AS TO WHETHER TO HOLD GOA TO JULY 10 DATE:

(A) GOA WILL HOLD DISCUSSIONS JULY 10 IF WE INSIST;
(B) UNTIL GOA POLICY DECISIONS ARE MADE, THERE WILL BE NO CHANGE IN GOA POSITION ENUNCIATED IN FEBRUARY DISCUSSIONS. AS CHAIRMAN OF U.S. DELEGATION CONCLUDED IN FEBRUARY, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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"UNLESS THE POLICY REVIEW AND SUBSEQUENT MINISTERIAL AND CABINET DECISIONS VARY DRAMATICALLY FROM THE STANCE OUTLINED WITH GOA DELS' POSITION PAPER, THE NEXT MEETING WILL PRODUCE NO RESULTS;"

(C) GOA IS GIVING PRIORITY TO AVIATION DISCUSSIONS WITH U.K.; A CLEAR OBJECTIVE IS TO ACHIEVE REDUCED FARES, WHICH WILL NOT ONLY SATISFY AUSTRALIAN CONSUMER PRESSURES BUT WILL PROVIDE CONCRETE SUPPORT FOR AUSTRALIAN ARGUMENT THAT THEIR APPROACH IS EFFECTIVE IN REDUCING FARES;

(D) AVIATION POLICY IS INDEED POSING DIFFICULT CHOICES FOR AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT, AND DELAY IN FORMULATING POLICY APPEARS NOT TO BE A DELIBERATE DELAYING TACTIC ON PART OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT;

(E) THERE IS NO CERTAINTY THAT AUSTRALIAN AVIATION POLICY DECISIONS OR SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSIONS OF AUSTRALIAN AVIATION DISCUSSIONS WITH BRITISH WILL PUT US ANY CLOSER IN AUGUST OR SEPTEMBER TO A SUCCESSFUL RESOLUTION OF OUR AVIATION PROBLEMS WITH AUSTRALIA.

6. FACTORING IN THESE CONSIDERATIONS, AND BEING REASONABLY CONVINCED THAT THE AUSTRALIANS ARE NOT NOW STALLING, I RECOMMEND THAT WE FIX A FIRM DATE IN LATE

AUGUST/EARLY SEPTEMBER WHICH WOULD BE HELD TO COME HELL
OR HIGH WATER, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER AUSTRALIAN POLICY
REVIEW IS FINISHED OR NOT. WE SEE NO REASON WHY THE
SUBSTANCE OF THIS MESSAGE CANNOT BE SHOWN TO THE INDUSTRY
PRESSURE POINTS.

7. REQUEST IMMEDIATE INSTRUCTIONS.
SQUIRE

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